

CIA's Webster Agrees to Stay Another Month

By Ann Devroy
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Bush yesterday asked retiring CIA Director William H. Webster to remain in office for at least a month longer than planned because of the delay in confirmation hearings for Robert M. Gates, the president's nominee for the post.

White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater, in a written statement, said Webster had agreed to delay his scheduled July 31 departure for one month. There would still have to be an acting director for some period because the Gates hearings are scheduled to begin Sept. 16.

Fitzwater, describing Bush as "frustrated and angry" over Gates's predicament, said the president yesterday "made an impassioned speech before the Cabinet this morning on the outstanding qualities of Bob Gates and how much he supports him."

Fitzwater described Bush as expressing "his personal outrage at much of the efforts to denigrate" Gates's character "by innuendo and leaked stories."

Gates's problems in confirmation came after Alan D. Fiers, former chief of the CIA's Central American task force, acknowledged to the independent counsel investigating the Iran-contra affair that he had given untruthful information to Congress. He pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors of unlawfully withholding information from Congress and agreed to cooperate with independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh.

That agreement, which came after the Gates nomination, caused the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to postpone Gates's confirmation hearing until Fiers and others can be questioned about what Gates,

as the No. 2 man at the CIA at the time, knew about the Reagan administration's arms sales to Iran, the diversion of profits from those sales to the contra rebels in Nicaragua and the effort being run out of the White House to resupply the contras after Congress had cut off military aid.

Fiers has said Clair E. George, third in command at the CIA, was aware of the secret diversion of funds in summer of 1986. Gates, before withdrawing his nomination to head the CIA in 1987 because of Iran-contra fallout, said he learned of the diversion in fall of 1986.

The Washington Post A5
The New York Times _____
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____
Date 24 July 1991